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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 VATICAN 001744

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DEPT. FOR EUR/WE (VAN CLEVE), EUR/PD/PA, DRL/IRF

FROM EMBASSY VATICAN/MESSAGE NO. 51/01

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: VATICAN - "VIEWS FROM THE HILL"

1. THE MARCH 24 - 30 EDITION OF NEWS AND VIEWS FROM VATICAN CITY.

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- SPOKESMAN SAYS POPE IN GOOD SHAPE FOR AN OCTOGENARIAN
- PAPAL TRAVEL PLANS FOR BULGARIA

VATICAN SEEKS UN ROLE IN BIOTECH MONITORING

2. THE VATICAN'S PERMANENT OBSERVER TO UN FOOD AGENCIES, ARCHBISHOP AGOSTINO MARCHETTO, OPINED THAT THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN HEALTH RISKS OF BIO-ENGINEERED FOOD DEMAND STRONGER INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND CONTROLS. THE REPRESENTATIVE SAID THE UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURAL ORGANIZATION SHOULD CONSIDER TAKING A LEAD ROLE, ESPECIALLY IN EDUCATION AND PREVENTATIVE MEASURES. ACCORDING TO ARCHBISHOP MARCHETTO, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES RAISED BY GENETICALLY ALTERED FOODS HAVE A GLOBAL IMPACT AND THUS REQUIRE INTERNATIONALLY GUARANTEED STANDARDS. HE SAID THE FAO SHOULD ACTIVELY PURSUE "BIOSECURITY" QUESTIONS, DRAWING ON ITS POSITION AS A CENTRALIZED AGENCY OF INFORMATION AND RESEARCH ON AGRICULTURAL ISSUES. THE ARCHBISHOP SAID THIS WOULD ALLOW THE ORGANIZATION TO CONTINUE TO HELP MEMBER STATES ENACT CONTROL PROCEDURES FOR THE FOOD PRODUCTION PHASE AND AS WELL AS WAYS TO COMBAT EMERGENCIES.

VATICAN SAYS DRUG INJECTION ROOMS "UNETHICAL"

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3. THE VATICAN'S PERMANENT OBSERVER THE UN AGENCIES IN VIENNA, AUSTRIA, MONSIGNOR DOMINIQUE REZEAU, HAS DESCRIBED DRUG INJECTION ROOMS WHERE ADDICTS CAN SHOOT UP UNDER MEDICAL SUPERVISION AS "UNETHICAL AND MISGUIDED." REZEAU SAID GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS SHOULD FOCUS INSTEAD ON ADDICTS' REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION INTO SOCIETY. HE SAID DRUG DEPENDENCY WAS NOT A RIGHT OR A FREEDOM BECAUSE IT DAMAGED THE ADDICT AND WAS A SELF-RENUNCIATION OF PERSONAL DIGNITY. REZEAU SAID COUNTRIES IN FAVOR OF THE INJECTION ROOMS POINTED TO REDUCTIONS IN OVERDOSE DEATHS, INFECTIONS AND DISEASE TRANSMISSION AS BENEFITS OF THE INJECTING ROOM PROGRAM. HE RETORTED THAT SUCH PROGRAMS HAD DISADVANTAGES INCLUDING A NEGLIGIBLE DESIRE FOR SOCIAL REINTEGRATION. MONSIGNOR REZEAU SAID DRUG REHABILITATION PROGRAMS EQUALLY REDUCE INSTANCES OF OVERDOSE AND INFECTION, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME HELPING ADDICTS TO RECOVER THEIR PLACE IN SOCIETY.

POPE ISSUES CHALLENGE TO SICILIAN MAFIA

4. IN A MESSAGE TO SICILY'S BISHOPS, POPE JOHN PAUL II STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE FIGHT AGAINST THE MAFIA. HE SAID SICILY COULD ONLY DEVELOP ITS FULL POTENTIAL IF THE MOB WERE DEFEATED. THE PONTIFF DESCRIBED THE MAFIA AS THE WORST OF SICILY'S EVILS.

VATICAN SPOKESMAN SAYS POPE IS "YOUNG FOR HIS AGE"

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5. VATICAN SPOKESMAN, JOAQUIN NAVARRO-VALLS, CLAIMED MARCH 26 THAT POPE JOHN PAUL II REMAINS "YOUNG FOR HIS AGE" IN SPIRIT AND ENTHUSIASM AND THAT IN THE 22 YEARS OF HIS PAPACY HE HAS NEVER GIVEN UP ON A SINGLE THING HE SET OUT TO DO BECAUSE OF HEALTH REASONS. (NOTE: NAVARRO-VALLS IS OVER-

ENTHUSIASTIC IN HIS APPRAISAL OF THE PAPAL CONSTITUTION. THE POPE'S SCHEDULE HAS IN FACT BEEN ALTERED ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION TO ACCOMMODATE HIS ILLNESS. HE ALMOST COLLAPSED DURING ONE EVENT BECAUSE OF A STOMACH VIRUS AND HAD TO BE HELPED BACK INTO HIS APARTMENT. END NOTE). NAVARRO-VALLS CLAIMED THE POPE HAS THE PHYSICAL CAPACITY FOR THE WORK HE IS DOING. THE COMMENTS CAME AHEAD OF THE PONTIFF'S UP-COMING PILGRIMAGE TO SYRIA, GREECE AND MALTA. RECENT VISITORS TO VATICAN CITY, INCLUDING AN AMCIT KOREAN BISHOP, HAVE DESCRIBED THE POPE AS HAVING GOOD AND BAD DAYS.

PAPAL TRAVEL PLANS FOR BULGARIA

16. VATICAN-BASED NEWS AGENCIES REPORT THE VATICAN IS STUDYING THE POSSIBILITY OF A PAPAL TRIP TO BULGARIA IN 2002. THE PRESIDENT OF THE BULGARIAN BISHOPS CONFERENCE CONFIRMED THE REPORT. SPEAKING TO REPORTERS IN ROME, BISHOP

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CHRISTO PROYKOV STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF A PAPAL VISIT TO PREDOMINANTLY ORTHODOX BULGARIA. IF THE TRIP GOES AHEAD IT WOULD BE THE FIFTH TRIP FOR POPE JOHN PAUL II TO AN ORTHODOX COUNTRY AFTER ROMANIA AND HIS UPCOMING VISITS TO GREECE, UKRAINE AND ARMENIA. BISHOP PROYKOV SAID THE LEADER OF
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BULGARIA'S ORTHODOX CHURCH, PATRIARCH MAXIM, HAD AGREED TO MEET WITH THE POPE IF HE CAME, BUT ALSO THAT HE WOULD BE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY THE RESULTS OF THE POPE'S VISIT TO GREECE IN MAY. (COMMENT: WITH NEWS AGENCIES ALSO REPORTING A POSSIBLE PAPAL VISIT TO CYPRUS, THE POPE'S OUTREACH TO THE ORTHODOX CHURCH APPEARS TO BE GAINING MOMENTUM. IT IS NO SECRET THAT POPE JOHN PAUL WOULD CONSIDER THE HEALING OF THE

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TEN-CENTURY RIFT WITH ORTHODOXY AS THE PINNACLE OF HIS PAPACY. END COMMENT). MERANTE

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